

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
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R 251436Z JUL 77  
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5472

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: OVIP (BEGIN, MENAHEM), IS, US  
SUBJECT: RABIN CRITICAL OF BEGIN'S WASHINGTON STRATEGY

REF: TEL AVIV 5422

1. IN A RADIO INTERVIEW ON JULY 23 FORMER PRIME MINISTER RABIN TOOK BEGIN TO TASK FOR GLOSSING OVER SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCES WITH THE U.S. DURING HIS VISIT. WHILE CON-  
CEDING THAT BEGIN'S APPEARANCE IN WASHINGTON WAS IMPRESSIVE AND DIGNIFIED AND COMPLIMENTING HIM FOR ENHANCING ISRAEL'S IMAGE AS WELL AS THAT OF THE OFFICE OF HTE PRIME MINISTER, RABIN WAS CRITICAL OF BEGIN'S FAILURE TO TAKE ISRAEL'S CASE TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IN AN EFFORT TO CHANGE THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY. HE SAID "THE CONFRONTATION WHICH FAILED TO MATERIALIZE DURING THE WASHINGTON TALKS IS CERTAIN TO OCCUR AT GENEVA; AND, WITH THE U.S. POSITION UN-  
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CHANGED, ISRAEL WOULD BE COMPLETELY ISOLATED (THERE)."  
HE INDICATED THE U.S./ISRAELI DIFFERENCES PLACE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE IN DOUBT, EVEN IF CONVENED. "HOW CAN ONE EXPECT THE ARABS TO ADOPT A MORE MODERATE POSITION THAN WASHINGTON?"

2. RABIN ALSO MAINTAINED THAT BY STRESSING THAT HIS

TALKS HAD DEEPENED U.S./ISRAELI FRIENDSHIP, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD BY IMPLICATION GIVEN ISRAELI LEGITIMACY TO THE U.S. POSITION. HE ADDED THAT LABOR PARTY PRIME MINISTERS HAD NEVER SAID THAT FRIENDSHIP WITH THE U.S. WAS UNLIMITED, BUT HAD ACKNOWLEDGED BASIC POLICY DIFFERENCES WITH WASHINGTON WHILE NOTING ISRAEL'S TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

3. RABIN JUSTIFIED HIS DECISION TO CRITICIZE BEGIN PUBLICLY ON GROUNDS THAT THE OFFICIAL PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT WAS BY THEN (JULY 23) OVER AND BECAUSE ALLEGEDLY A SENIOR ISRAELI OFFICIAL HAD CRITICIZED THE FORMER GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IN A BRIEFING OF ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS IN WASHINGTON.

4. COMMENT: WE NOTE THAT BEGIN TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY ON HIS "MEET THE PRESS" INTERVIEW TO RETURN A SWIPE AT HIS PREDECESSOR BY REMARKING IN REFERENCE TO A RABIN STATEMENT LAST YEAR ON POSSIBLE PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA "...THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS I AM NOW PRIME MINISTER AND NOT MR. RABIN."

5. THE DAY BEFORE HIS PUBLIC CRITICISM RABIN HAD BEEN MORE GENEROUS TOWARDS BEGIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH THE CHARGE (REFTEL). PERHAPS THE PRESS, BY ITS CONCENTRATION ON THE NEGATIVE POINTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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HAS GIVEN RABIN'S CRITICISM MORE STRIDENT TREATMENT THAN INTENDED BY THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR TO RABIN AND TO OTHER OBSERVERS HERE THAT BEGIN HAS EFFECTED A BASIC CHANGE IN STRATEGY WITH REGARD TO THE U.S. AND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. WHEREAS PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS HAD BELIEVED IT ESSENTIAL TO COORDINATE U.S./ISRAELI POLICY AS A PREREQUISITE TO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA, BEGIN HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO PROCEED TO GENEVA TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE ARABS WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO RESOLVE HIS DIFFERENCES WITH THE U.S. BEFOREHAND. AS EVALUATION OF BEGIN'S TRIP BEGINS IN EARNEST, THERE IS ALREADY NERVOUSNESS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S GAMBLE WILL LEAVE ISRAEL ALONE AND VULNERABLE AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT. LITTLE ATTENTION HAS YET BEEN PAID TO RABIN'S IMPLIED SUGGESTION THAT THE ISRAELI CASE SHOULD HAVE BEEN AKEN TO "THE AMERICAN PUBLIC" OVER THE HEAD OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, A PROCEDURE FRAUGHT WITH DANGER WHICH MIGHT HAVE BACK-FIRED ON ISRAEL.  
LEWIS

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## Message Attributes

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